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CC:	
Date:	Mon, 5/20/2013 8:48:00 AM
Subject:	Op-Ed draft Last Version

Jeff
Sorry to disturb you. This is the right draft. It has certain slight but important modifications. Please delete the previous one to avoid confusion. Thx.
Best
EB
>>>
>>> The unfolding tragedy in Syria which already cost the lives of 75 thousands had culminated these days with evidence of the use of nerve agents by the Assad regime against his own citizens and the videotaped executions as well as canibalism in the name of God on behalf of the rebels. Have we said: "tough neighbourhood " ? lives lost, red lines crossed but no coordinated plan, in sight, to end it had yet emerged.
>>> Beyond the human suffering three main risks are embedded in this situation: first, the very continuation of the blood spill in a place where blood revenge is a cultural norm and the conflict already became a magnet for extremist groups complicates the ending of the bloodshed and increase the odds of post Assad Syria ending up as a failing state, a new Lebanon at best or somalia at worst.
>>> Secondly, the possibility of much wider use of chemical weapons grows with every round of actual use, as the psychological thresholds and impact of external deterrence are waning out. And with it the prospect of chemical weapons in terrorists hands and the internal civil war deteriorating into much wider regional conflict. A, deterioration can easily develop as a result of a Syrian attempts to transfer advanced weapon systems to Hezbollah in Lebanon, as Israel is committed to block it. physically if necessary
>>> Thirdly,and probably more important, the intensive ,risky and resource demanding dealing with the Syrian crisis might detract leaders from tackling the Iranian military nuclear program which in the long term is much more dangerous.
>>> Assad's armed forces are weak, and heavily attrited by the infighting . more than one player on the world stage or even in the region can destroy his airforce and air defence within a relatively short timeframe. but thats won't necessarily end the fighting or secure the CW arsenal. when one considers the alternatives which had been raised:no fly zone to be imposed by US, Nato orTurkish force separately or combined," cordon sanitaire"' for refugees along the Turkish and Jordanian borders,US or Israeli attacks on the CW capabilities i feel that at this stage all options should remain on the table but worth a try at being avoided and the key to the shortest and life cost reducing path is not in any neighbour's hands ,but in Moscow. it could be argued that under different set of early decisions and actions we would already had won the case over Assad. but that doesn't matter. answers should be given now,immediately, based on PRESENT situation.
>>>
>>> The Kremlin has at its disposal the leverages that can convince Assad to leave and at least to stop fighting immediately as a first step towards it. The Russian leaders are as clever as we are and fully understand that Assad is doomed and lost legitimacy.It is not too hard to asses why they are reluctant to say it loudly at this stage.If we want to see an end of fighting and do not want to see Jabhat al Nosra or the likes running Syria added probably by years of bloody massacre of Alawites and others in a no man's land Syria we need Russia to be asked to lead the international effort to end it,with all other players supporting it. in a way a mirror image of what happened in Libya, where Russia was asked to support an effort lead by the Europeans and backed by the US..
>>> The Kremlin ,for more than forty years,invested a lot of political capital,financial resources and prestige in the Assads dynasty.They still do. their readiness to keep their commitment to give him

SA300 AD and improved radars for the Yakhont shore to sea missiles systems is worrying . in the past they trained and equipped the Syrians.provided intelligence gathering capabilities, they know the CW units generals on first name basis . they perceived the naval outpost in Tartous and Latakia as strategically important for them. and they are making an effort that we don't like, to protect those assets.we should be realistic. the challenge is not to educate Russia. and even if would try it it would end up impractical. its true in the other direction as well/. they can't educate us/ the real challenge for both is to put an end to the massacre without loosing the capability of following cease fire to remove Assad from power. This can not be achieved in a simple way now without the Russians at a leading role. i don't think that a mutually agreed special role for Russia in post Assad Syria,including naval base rights in the above mentioned ports is a bad deal for all of us ,bearing in mind the alternatives. we can always turn back to the tougher choices if this one fails.
>>> The Russians are short of perfect as all of us sometimes are. but they are an important world power with special relevance to Eastern Europe, the Middle East and the Caucasus.They have their own interests and perspectives that have to be taken into account parallel to those of all other players. so, there will be a price for their readiness to lead. this price is what has to be pre negotiated. Russia might push to the table other issues from MD, to other points of difference with the US or its allies.
>>> but Putin behaved in a very responsible manner when it came to supply of advanced air defence systems to Iran. and as of now Syria is still several months from potentially having SA300 operational.not to mention that however modern and effective those systems are they are not invincible or undestroyable.
>>> it is my judgment that giving Russia the opportunity to lead and hopefully succeed in such an effort can help shaping not just Syria but Russian attitude towards cooperation on world stage regarding other sour issues.
>>> news are that secretary Kerry's trip to Russia had not yet yielded this result. it was however an important visit that proves the sincerity of the Secretary and the administration in trying exhausting all alternatives before turning to tougher choices. I'm confident of the need to try again. thats not a zero-sum game. we have to retry,open minded, self confident, not out of weakness but out of sobriety regarding the huge toll of paralysis. no one can assure success. but it worth trying once again. even harder.
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